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1 Georgina Born is Professor of Music and Anthropology at Oxford University. Her work brilliantly combines ethnographic and theoretical writings on music, media, and cultural production, and has had a major influence on the way music is studied today. Her specific approach is reflected in the work of the research program she now leads at Oxford: "Music, Digitisation, Mediation: Toward Interdisciplinary Music Studies" (MusDig). Interdisciplinarity has been a keystone of her research right from the outset, and was even the object of specific attention in recent years.[1] This interview was conducted in March 2015, when Georgina Born was at the Ehess in Paris for a roundtable dedicated to her "Relational Musicology". In this extensive, wide-ranging discussion, we retrace the origins of two of her major ethnographic studies, at Ircam and the BBC, and delve into how she developed her specific, interdisciplinary methodology. She makes a convincing case for reading outside disciplinary borders, and discusses how her research has changed as she has become more established. Her critics are addressed, and the interview ends with a glance to future projects, which aim to bring together the various threads her research has explored over the years.

Intellectual background and personal trajectory

IGOR CONTRERAS AND ANNELIES FRYBERGER. — Your methodology is resolutely interdisciplinary—drawing on anthropology, sociology, media and cultural studies, and psychoanalysis, among other fields. It is striking that these methodological foundations are very much in place already in your first book (which came out of your PhD Thesis), *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Musical Avant-Garde.*[2] Could you tell us how you developed your approach? What or who influenced you most at the time?

Georgina Born. — I'm afraid it's a fairly unexciting answer: I'd just done my anthropology first degree at University College London (UCL) in Britain, which is a top

department. It was a very eclectic anthropology degree, which has evolved in a more conservative direction since then. At the time, we were reading into social theory, sociology, phenomenology, hermeneutics, cultural theory, development studies, Marxism, and theories of history—so it was a very broad and interesting training. When I finished my first class degree, they offered me a grant to do a PhD, and I decided to take it, but I couldn't find the supervision that I needed, so effectively I had very little. In the end, the unexciting answer is, I made this methodology myself. I just put things together. We had done some Bourdieu and Foucault, and I was also interested in psychoanalytic theory as I was myself in psychoanalysis, my mother was a psychoanalyst, and I had read some psychoanalytic theory. I was very interested, and have remained interested, in the way that some people have been able to bring psychoanalysis together with cultural theory, although it tends to be done in rather reductive ways. I found my own route to using Kleinian ideas, and I wrote a major paper for the *American Anthropologist* extending my use of psychoanalytic ideas from my book on IRCAM—a much more general paper arguing for the relevance specifically of Kleinian ideas for cultural theory and analysis.[3] My methodology is thus a sort of self-crafted amalgam.

The other thing I didn't know at the time, which I'm glad to know post hoc, is that in anthropology, the way we tend to work with theoretical approaches, in relation to ethnography, is really to use them as they come to hand. If something demands to be thought about and conceptualized in some way from the fieldwork, one goes to look for the approach that will somehow work. I think there are many dangers in this rather eclectic, pluralist approach to theory, but I've tried to give some rigor and sense to it, and to give it some coherence. However, I fully acknowledge that it's a radically different approach to one that begins with a particular theoretical school and where one says: "I am here, and this is incompatible with that, so I won't do it." I never worked that way, and I think most social and cultural anthropologists don't work that way, at least in the European tradition. In a later paper, "The Social and the Aesthetic: For a Post-Bourdieuian Theory of Cultural Production,"[4] I reflect on my methodology and I create this idea of a post-positivist empiricism, which I source loosely to Deleuze—but there are other sources. The idea is that concepts and theory exist to be used as tools, and themselves evolve through the way that they encounter and engage with subtle empirical research. In this stance empiricism can have powerful conceptual effects. This I'm very committed to: the idea that our rich, non-reductive empirical research doesn't just fit into a given approach, but helps us to continue to evolve and bring into new articulations bodies of theory and thought. When you're strong enough to deal with this freedom, it allows for a certain originality; we were able to forge what we wanted to do. My partner Andrew Barry, interestingly, was one of the first British academics to use the work of Bruno Latour and Michel Callon in his sociology of science PhD thesis.[5] He built a relationship with Callon and Latour when he came to the Center for the Sociology of Innovation (CSI) in Paris, and he was one of the earliest people to use their ideas in Britain. We had a lot of freedom—but it's a freedom that is also frightening and has pitfalls and perils. I think from the perspective of the CSI people, this weird amalgam that I created of some Bourdieu, some Foucault, a bit of psychoanalysis, a bit of semiotics—even though I myself "invented" my own theory of mediation, akin in some ways to theirs—this method probably just looked like a fairly crazy patchwork. They resolutely ignored my work!—and it is interesting to recall that

the advice of those CSI bosses to younger academics was: "never cite other thinkers, just make your own mark!" It's a different style. As to ethnographic method: nobody taught me how to do ethnography—when doing a PhD in Anthropology in London in the early to mid-80s, the training in this was minimal. I learned it as I did it and made my own decisions, informed by reading. And in fact, even today graduate students in Anthropology in Britain don't seem to get taught how to do it. In reaction, I have a strong commitment to teaching ethnography, and one of my future projects is to write a short but conceptually sharp book on how to do ethnography. In the last decade I've built up something of a specialism, teaching workshops to graduate students in a number of disciplines—not just in anthropology but music, geography, sociology, interdisciplinary humanities and so on.

I. C. AND A. F. — At the beginning of your book on IRCAM, you talk about your experience as a performing musician. What were your reasons for sharing this autobiographical narrative at the outset of this book, and could you describe more generally how your work as a musician has influenced your intellectual work?

G. B. — That is not a simple question to answer. I've always taken the view that I should reveal something about myself, in a reflexive way, in my ethnographies. But I don't want to overwhelm the text: I don't believe that my intellectual work is reducible to my biography in any simple way. I want to mention that the critics of the book on Ircam, and in particular Jean-Baptiste Barrière, who wrote the most stunning critique and yet, ironically, was also one of my closest informants, accused me of not saying enough about the reasons I wrote the book that I did—that is, of not saying enough about myself.[6] However, his premise was that there was something in my formation that over-determines the book, which I utterly reject. So, you can't get it right: either you say too much, or you say too little about yourself—you can't win that one. In my ethnography of the BBC,[7] in 560 pages I include one half-page anecdote about a dream I had during the fieldwork, which was an interesting dream because it's about the fear and paranoia I was having in the middle of the study when the BBC management began to try to control everything I was doing. One review of the book in particular said: "Why is this woman writing about her dream?" Half a page in 560 pages! So either it's too little or it's too much—revealing yourself is tricky. You have to make a judgement.

I was trained as a classical pianist as a child from the age of five, and from age seven I was admitted to the junior department of the Royal College of Music. I took up harp and then cello as a second instrument, and cello became my main instrument; by age 14 I could have pursued a classical performance career. I had the whole intensive training—history, theory, chamber music, orchestra and so on until age 16; but from then on I dropped in and out, and I began to play contemporary music. I had a stormy adolescence and I stopped playing cello for a while. At 18, I began the Royal College of Music's performance course, but within six months I couldn't stand the conservatism of the place, musically and culturally, and I knew I didn't have the discipline or determination to succeed as a soloist or quartet player, so I dropped the course. By then I was playing in various kinds of contemporary music around London, and playing cello in a band; we played the first London premiere of Terry Riley's *In C*, that kind of thing. I was also playing with Michael Nyman's band—he lived in the same district—and about the same time, I was singing in a rock group. Then I went to art school—that was very important, very interesting for me. I had a year at the Chelsea School of Art, which I really enjoyed. And after that, for a while I wanted to be a composer: I studied fugue,

counterpoint and so on, and applied and got accepted at Cambridge University to study composition. But then I saw an advert for a bass player in an interesting group: Henry Cow. I applied and, amazingly, I got the job, because by then they were writing complex scores, and I was the only person they interviewed who could read those scores. However, I'd never played bass guitar before! So I tuned the bass in fifths—like the cello—and then I could make it work. After a few months of rehearsal with them in the very hot summer of 1976, when punk music was breaking out all over the UK, we went on tour. I dropped my place to read composition at Cambridge, and that began two years of touring almost constantly—well, for about six months each year. Henry Cow was in a kind of turmoil, because money was short. The group had become independent of their former record company, Virgin Records, trying to manage themselves and create alternative institutions. They did manage this for several years, but it wasn't working out economically.

This experience with Henry Cow remains perhaps the most formative in my whole career. Why? Not so much because of the music, but because of the whole experience. We were working everywhere in Europe, in political ways. We went all over Italy doing tours playing at numerous *Feste dell'Unità*, which were the Communist Party's summer festivals that happened in every large city and small town, all summer long. In France, we would play the circuit of *Maisons de la Culture* in lots of provincial cities and towns all over the country, as well as the Socialist Party's summer festival in Paris. Wherever we played, we were doing work at the borders of new music and politics. I was 20 years old; the rest of the group was much older, and I didn't yet really have the formation to understand fully what we were doing (remember, I hadn't yet been to university). It left me with a lifetime of questions about the articulation between music and politics and the social, and it was full of contradictions. There's a little paper I've written recently on this whole experience about politics and Henry Cow.[8] It tells some of the stories, for instance, about turning up in a town outside Naples to play a *Festa dell'Unità* to effectively an audience of Italian farmers and peasants. We started late in the evening with our atonal rock, our polyrhythmic scores—we have recordings of all these gigs—and about 2 minutes in, somebody starts to boo, about 3 or 4 minutes in people start to clap in a hostile way, and then we continued to play for an hour and a half—and this noise carries on the whole time! We didn't discuss this much in the band in my memory, but I was left thinking: "What does it mean to bring modernist rock with political lyrics to Italian peasants in a *Festa dell'Unità*? And to elicit hostility and antipathy from those we were putatively trying to reach, to give musical pleasure to, and to politicize with our music?" These experiences left me with an intense set of questions that have informed all my later work.

What *didn't* inform my later work is some kind of mindless devotion to the music we were playing at the time, or any of my later performing work. Although I still find aspects of it very interesting, I was also very troubled by our music—especially the more modernist parts and the improvising. We did a great deal of electronic improvising in Henry Cow, in between and linking pieces and songs, often 20 or 30 minute group improvisations; and these days I find those passages much more fresh and interesting than the rather awful folk-rocky interludes, of which there were plenty. I also admire these days the most austere modernist pieces; they too stand the test of time quite well and offer what remains a very original soundworld. So, I am ambivalent about Henry Cow's music and I always have been. As you can hear, I always had some

doubts about what we did, but I was also fascinated by and believed in what we were trying to do. I'm very interested in the interface between music and politics, and while the group's aspirations were tremendous, the reality was problematic in a number of ways.

So back to Jean-Baptiste Barrière: where he and others might believe that I came to Ircam with a firm aesthetic position, as a proponent of modernist rock or free improvisation as some kind of solution to the future of music, and on this basis in my Ircam study I immediately took the view that everything being done there lacks musical interest, he's just plain wrong. But the other reason the criticism in his article is problematic is that he seems to misunderstand ethnographic method: when you do ethnography—and this is something that has repeatedly to be clarified—you aspire, reflexively, to bracket your own prior positions. Now of course no one does that perfectly, we're human beings after all and we have subjectivities; but the idea that this very complex, long research process of a year or more, and in the case of my BBC research several years and repeated updating, with the rigor one puts into doing over a hundred interviews and observing a great number of events, concerts, meetings, and so on—, the idea that this sustained and thorough research process is reducible simply to findings that are filtered through a prior perspective is misguided, and in some ways it is disrespectful to the procedures and the rigor of the processes that we go through as ethnographers. I take very, very seriously the rigor of empirical research; I do very deep work. At best, what results is a study where you build up a picture from multiple perspectives across a particular space as they evolve over a period of time, and try to retain an understanding of that complex totality with its internal differences. But in addition you read across from that fieldwork to other sources with which it is in counterpoint—composers' writings, documentation, histories, local theoretical discourses—to enrich your factual and conceptual grasp of your ethnographic object, adding further analytical perspective, as I did in *Rationalizing Culture*. That's what you try to do, no doubt imperfectly.

Ircam and the BBC: A glance back at two ethnographic studies

I. C. AND A. F. — Your ethnographic study of Ircam, conducted in 1984 with several subsequent visits up until 1992, was ground-breaking work—both due to the object of study (an institution of high-brow, Western culture) and because of its theoretical and methodological perspective. Could you talk about how you conducted your study? How did you do your fieldwork?

G. B. — I had some return visits in 1985 and 1986, and then the later updates were made through other contacts, but not by visiting Ircam. The book manuscript went in, believe it or not, in summer 1993—it then took two years to come out. So, first of all, regarding my access to make the study at Ircam: I was a 28-year-old, female PhD student from Britain. I learned afterwards that a number of French sociologists had been knocking on Ircam's door, including Pierre-Michel Menger, I believe, and they hadn't been successful in getting access to do research on the place. I tell you this just to say that I think I was the beneficiary of a kind of reverse sexism. I believe I was unthreatening, perceived to be just a nice young British woman, a non-entity—someone who would write a thesis that would disappear. I also think that the French intellectuals inside

Ircam at the time, including talented thinkers, did not understand what I meant when I said to them: "I'm doing an ethnography of this place." I think it's hard for people to take in what you are doing. Intellectually they may think they understand, but they perhaps don't really understand what you can do with it, and the scope one can achieve —linking ethnography to history, to the analysis of subjectivities, and so on. There were people among my informants to whom I became close: they entrusted me with their own critical reflections on Ircam, they would tell me intimately what was going on— they became what we call "key informants". But then in the book I develop relatively independent interpretations, and this may have offended their sensibilities; it might even have felt like a kind of betrayal. The irony is that my interpretations were deeply coloured by the insights these people entrusted to me. But as an ethnographer, one must retain a certain independence—or actually one's work is reduced to that of being an amanuensis, a mere chronicler. As I teach in my ethnography workshops, the task of the researcher is to move between two subject positions—between identification and distanciation.

Here's how the study happened: I'd been playing cello and bass guitar in a dance show at the Pompidou Center with my colleague Lindsey Cooper, and we got invited on a tour of Ircam. I had no idea Ircam even existed at that point. We went down underground; I think it was Tod Machover who showed us around. I'd begun my PhD and I was looking for a topic. I was going to do an anthropology of music in some way, and I immediately thought, "This place is amazing, bizarre. And I don't know anything about computer music!" So I thought it would make a great ethnographic focus. I asked Tod if I could write and ask for permission to come there, and he agreed. I wrote a letter asking to come to Ircam, and at the time I wanted to study three different music institutions, so I only wanted to visit Ircam for 3 or 4 months. He took my letter to some committee—he was by then the head of music research, I believe. The response was favorable. I have since learned, in Berkeley last year, that David Wessel was very formative in supporting my request, which I would expect, because David was always very open. I turned up in January 1984 and lived with friends across town. Within weeks, I thought: "this is *huge*, fascinating; I can't do this in 3 months." I asked to stay longer and they agreed.

I had no official status—I was kind of a tolerated outsider, I guess because I was a friendly young woman. Nonetheless, there's a certain suspicion when you do ethnography, and it took two or three months of going along to meetings and sessions, sitting in a corner, being quiet and respectful, and after a couple of months, something changes, and suddenly everybody feels that you're an insider. I think the psychology is that you've made a commitment to being there, to being respectful and to showing that you're intensely interested. There's a very interesting effect, which is that people begin to think: "ah, this person does care, does understand." So after a few months, because of Ircam's glass-walled offices, I would be in an office talking to somebody and someone else would walk past, and then that person would come up to me later and say: "You shouldn't just talk to that person, you must talk to me!" And so it went on.

I had this rule, a good anthropological-sociological rule: I wanted to talk to people from the very bottom—the cleaning staff and caretakers—through the secretaries, researchers, engineers, composers and composers' assistants or "tutors," to the very top—with the exception of Boulez, which we can address later. So I began a program of trying to get around all the corners of Ircam, to attempt to chart the culture of the entire institution. I did about one hundred recorded interviews; I took a lot of field

notes, and I observed many, many meetings and concerts. I built up a relationship with a couple of composers; the visit that is detailed most was the young British-Argentinian composer Alejandro Viñao. He was trying to use some of the most advanced Ircam software tools. He was not a programmer, but he was an experienced and good studio user and a very good electro-acoustician, and so he was a promising composer for Ircam. There was a very clear distinction being made by the younger generation of Ircam staff between those composers who would walk in—for example Harrison Birtwistle, György Ligeti, Gérard Grisey, and others—, who knew nothing about computer music, had no intention of learning, and had always to be given a tutor or an assistant; and those composers who came to Ircam with a fascination, desire, and drive to try to understand what the research staff were doing with the most advanced software tools and so on. Alejandro Viñao was one of the latter. He wanted to try working with the "Chant" and "Formes" programs, environments being developed at Ircam at the time. He seemed like a good composer to follow, so I did. But I made a number of relationships with people and followed a number of different dimensions and projects. Thus, my methodological principle was to be mobile and talk to many people, to immerse myself in different scenes within Ircam, in order to get these multiple perspectives. But certain people emerge—such as Tod Machover, Jean-Baptiste Barrière, and the African-American composer George Lewis—who offer to be in particularly intense dialogue with you. Often, these people are fascinated by being reflexive about their own work, and that is one of the great things about ethnography: such people want to think reflexively about the situation, and they become particularly significant informants, because you're thinking *with* them—you don't have to pull it out, they're telling you their *own* analytical reflections on the situation. So that's how it proceeded.

I. C. AND A. F. — Regarding Jean-Baptiste Barrière, did his virulent critique of your book then come as a surprise? He clearly saw it as a threat to the very existence of his institution and others like it, despite your careful considerations to the contrary. It's interesting to note the feeling of vulnerability expressed by his review, as if a book like this could destroy a cultural institution. As such it reveals his perspective that the foundation of Ircam might somehow be tenuous and vulnerable to attack.

G. B. — Isn't that strange, from the perspective of the present? When did his review come out, in 1999? So, we can laugh now—given that IRCAM has continued to hold such a central position in computer music-related research in the intervening decades. I wish my books had some power, some effect! But of course I never intended the book to have any such effect, to become a tool for political attacks; and in a way, one could say, how could it? I want to share another wonderful putdown of the book in a review by the British composer Julian Anderson.[9] He said, "This book will coin a genre." Which is another hilarious irony, because it hasn't coined a genre. How many books like it can you name? I mean, it's great that it's being read and has some influence, but to say that the book will coin a genre is of course a false compliment—implying that the book is merely creating a formula. They were both wrong about the book's effects, and so it's interesting to consider the effects it *is* actually having. In musicology, it has helped to put on the agenda the study of the key institutions within which music is cultivated and disseminated—concert organisations, festivals, conservatories, publishers, journals, radio stations—and this work is producing really important historical insights. I'm just reading at the moment about the afterlife of texts, and the afterlife of a book is very unpredictable. So I should thank Jean-Baptiste Barrière for thinking *Rationalizing Culture*

could be so powerful, even though it hasn't been—Ircam goes from strength to strength. The French government appears to continue to pour in money, and Ircam continues to have a key role globally in its fields, while probably retaining some of the weaknesses and characteristics I identified. This was vindicated when, in a visit to Berkeley in 2014, I met young composers who are also programmers who had recently been on visits to Ircam, and who related how certain ideologies that I anatomise in the book continue to be present. Perhaps the cultures of institutions don't change very fast.

When I wrote my BBC ethnography *Uncertain Vision*, based on research in the following decade (1995-2005), it was very different: unlike *Rationalizing Culture*, it was not intended to be just an academic book. I wanted this one to be more widely read, a public book, to have political and policy effects, but it had no effect at all! They buried it—the BBC itself, the powerful policy "think tank" scene in London—because, for them at the time, it didn't have the right message. Remember that this was the period of ascendance of neoliberal government under Blair, with marked effects on Britain's media scene in the mid-2000s; so the book's analysis of the destructive effects of the marketization of the BBC and of the imposition of a whole slate of new managerial reforms—auditing and accountability processes, which were actually forms of pseudo-accountability—wasn't heard, or was rejected. At the height of British neoliberalism, the book was unwelcome and treated as such. I tried hard to write pamphlets based on the research for the key think tanks—Demos and IPPR[10]—because I wanted the policy implications to get out. But the context was barren. They would say: "yes, we want you to write, but not *that*: can you write *this*?..." To bring this up to date: last year, in July 2014, I suddenly received an email from James Purnell. This man was the Secretary of State—the Minister—for Culture, Media, and Sport under New Labour from 2007 to 2008, and he is now the Director of Strategy at the BBC. He said: "I just read your BBC book. It's wonderful, let's meet to talk about it." Imagine! The book came out in 2004, and in 2014 he writes to tell me it's a wonderful book—ten years to get a reaction! And that's exactly where I wanted an effect to happen: with him and other people making the policies affecting the BBC, within the organization and in government. Indeed, Purnell wanted me to return to the BBC and advise or make another study of the relationship between creativity and organizational conditions—one of the core themes of the original book. So when we talk about the afterlife of texts, maybe the BBC book will now have an impact—the BBC is just going through its major ten-yearly Charter review, so it's a good time. Purnell has asked me to consider making a return visit, to do an update on my previous research. In contrast, those who imagined that my Ircam book might have wider political effects misjudged its potential. Perhaps it's too complex a book even for French politicians!

One thing that stung me about Barrière's critical review was the imputation to me that I'm a "postmodernist"—that if I'm critiquing a certain incarnation of modernism, then I must be a proponent of so-called postmodernism, where this is equated rather mechanically with a neoliberal, pro-market stance. The reasoning seems to be this: if I'm a critic of *this* particular public, state-funded cultural institution, then it follows that I'm a critic of *all* such public cultural institutions, and therefore I must be a neoliberal, because I only believe in markets in culture. But this is absurd; it is wildly wrong about my intellectual and musical work, and, equally, about my politics. If you look at my own history, at Henry Cow, and all the other situations of my musical work, and if you read my published work, not only my BBC study but even the very early

writings that preceded my Ircam book, and my political writings more widely, anyone would know that this is false. I find that kind of reasoning not a little dualist, and weak. One can defend public funding of the arts, as I consistently have, but not defend a particular instance or institution. Given its scarcity, public funding of the arts is rightly, and necessarily, contestable: it must be justified, and it is open to criticism. One can also be open-minded about modernism or, rather, *modernisms*—as we have come to think about them—in the plural. I think the debate, for example, about Afro-modernisms, and opening up how we think about modernism itself, beyond the monolith, is extremely important. I am so glad we are now beyond the period of holding to the crude dualism "modernism / postmodernism," as if this dualism can be equated with statist and pro-market positions and expresses all there is to fight over, also aesthetically and musically. In fact I'm struggling with this in my present work: what happens after the collapse of the hegemony of a certain Darmstadt-ian view of the mid- to late-20th century in contemporary art music? This is a question that emerges from my current fieldwork, so for me this debate is very vital—and, again, I don't have an a-priori position. Instead, I am trying to see how the younger musicians and artists with whom I'm in dialogue, who I encountered in my recent fieldwork, think the future is going. But I stand by my appraisal that, in the period I studied it, Ircam was policing its aesthetics, that it wasn't terribly generative musically, and that not a great deal of wonderful music was coming out of the place. I don't think I'm alone in that opinion. I will acknowledge, however, that I haven't kept up with the latest developments, and that there may be some jewels that escaped my notice. For example, I am a passionate admirer of Kaija Saariaho's music. She was marginal at Ircam in the period of my study, a "squatter," as I wrote in the book, but over the years she has justly become extremely well recognized, a global figure. I know she has been back to Ircam and no doubt some of her work has been produced and played there. What I'm saying is that there have been a number of misreadings of my Ircam book that were probably not wilful, but reflect a certain rigidity of interpretation of my stance. I continue to reject those criticisms.

Another common criticism of my Ircam study is about Boulez: why I chose not to talk to Boulez. The answer is exactly as I wrote in the book. I felt very fragile as a PhD student. I don't think Ircam was fragile. I was there on sufferance, as you always are when you do ethnography in an organization and with individuals. If somebody decides not to talk to you—and that does occur—you can't do anything; you have to gracefully withdraw. I knew I could be thrown out of the place at any time. This was my first ethnographic project, and I was making up my fieldwork method as I went along. I knew that if I was sitting in dialogue with Boulez, if for any reason he made a negative judgment about me, or decided that my research wasn't particularly helpful, I would be thrown out. It was also objectively the case that he had an overpowering intellectual presence: I immersed myself in his writings and interviews, which were copious, subtle and nuanced, and I really didn't think I could achieve additional insights from an hour's interview with Boulez. Remember that I was often in meetings in which he was present and speaking; he knew about and clearly tolerated my presence at Ircam. Perhaps, at the end of the study, I could have gone to him and said, "well, I've had these and these impressions, Mr. Boulez, what would you say to that?" Maybe that would have been the correct thing to do.

But that raises another misunderstanding about method, because at the end of my ethnographic fieldwork I had an unsorted mess of material—as you always do at the end of fieldwork—and it took from then until 1989, several years, to organize that material, come up with an analysis and write my PhD thesis. It's a well-established truth, best expressed by the anthropologist Marilyn Strathern in her wonderful writings on ethnography, that the ethnographic research process is emergent, and that ethnography has rhizomic qualities. One collects over time these myriad, disconnected pockets of observation, of interview, and other documentary inputs, and then, with struggle, things gradually coalesce into an interpretation and an analysis. But the analysis doesn't coalesce in a steady, serial process over the course of the fieldwork; nor does it come to you ready-made. You're rushing around—"oh I haven't done that, I've only got three weeks left, I still haven't interviewed all these people..." That's what fieldwork is like. So perhaps two or three years later, I could have made sense of it and summarized what's in the book and approached Boulez. Would he have made time? Somehow I doubt it. And I felt vulnerable; I also felt that I wasn't very important. I didn't know the book was going to have an impact. I just felt enormously grateful to have been given the chance to be there, and relieved that the fieldwork itself was a tremendously interesting and, mostly, warm human experience. It's a testament to the intellectual and human generosity of the people then at Ircam that I was able to do it—people like David Wessel, Tod Machover, Steve McAdams, Xavier Rodet and his group, George Lewis, Alejandro Viñao, Adrian Freed, and Jean-Baptiste Barrière. I feel immensely grateful—they gave me a chance to try to create some kind of picture of Ircam and its place in history.

I. C. AND A. F. — With your work on Ircam and the BBC as background, let us look more broadly at research which tackles cultural institutions. What kind of problems arise, in your experience, with this type of research object? Do such institutions, or some of them, clearly try to control the discourse produced about them, whether historical, sociological, or aesthetic? What would be their reasons for doing so, if this is the case?

G. B. — I was lucky with both the Ircam study and the BBC study because I was unknown to these institutions. And at the BBC, I learned that academia doesn't mean anything to media people. I was in my early 40s when I did my BBC study—rushing home to two small children—and people would condescend to me; they'd say: "Oh, are you doing a PhD?" And I would think: "I'm in my early 40s... no, I'm not doing a PhD." But that was how they saw me. I was fortunate because I wasn't threatening, and that is helpful. My current work is totally different: now people may know who I am, so I can't escape my reputation. It's a very different experience doing research late in your career: people think they know what I think, what my interpretation will be; they may have read my Ircam book and have a simplistic view, for instance, that I'm hostile to modernism, or what have you. (This is, by the way, a repeated misrepresentation of my work; read, for example, the crude attacks—uninformed by most of what I've published and even by my biography—by Bjorn Heile or, recently, Gianmario Borio.) My two earlier ethnographies were freer in that sense.

At the BBC I was quite free for a long time—at first I had to sign only a minimal letter of agreement. It's an interesting story, because, again, people had been trying for years to make an inside study of the BBC but hadn't succeeded. I succeeded, of course, for contingent reasons, but also because I'm very determined. I had two girlfriends who worked at the BBC, one in radio and one in television drama. I mobilized them both,

and through both I got meetings. One was with the top civil servant at the BBC, a Kafka-esque figure, the so-called Secretary, and he asked to see my existing books. When we met, his reaction to my Ircam book was hilarious: "Ah, very interesting; perhaps *too* interesting for the BBC!" The way they do things is to be passive, so he simply said: "Well, you may approach television." I approached the head of television, and he came back to me saying that I should study the community programming unit, the science documentary unit, and a third which I can't remember: all sections that are blamelessly "public service," "high-end" programming, relatively uncontroversial. In this phone call I hadn't known he would suggest this, but I knew what I wanted to do, so I said: "Oh, I'm sorry, but I actually want to study drama, news, and documentary." And I could hear silence, because, as it turned out, these were the troublesome areas—full of problems, which was a good reason to research them. But he too could not really stand in my way—a mere academic wanting to study a public institution. My second girlfriend was in drama, and put me in touch with the head of drama. I went to a meeting with this man, who ran the biggest, most costly department of the BBC, tens of millions of pounds a year, and after two minutes, he said: "Wonderful, I want to do it. When can you start?" I looked at him, I hadn't even given him my pitch! It's funny now, but at the time I was really puzzled. Well, it became obvious to me months later that this man had his own agenda: he wanted somebody to come in and chart what was happening inside the BBC's drama department as a result of government and high-level BBC management policies—marketization and so on—, the effects of which on creative work in drama he believed were highly destructive. Within six months of my starting my research, he would resign and leave the BBC.

So, it was contingent; I got there through luck, guile and determination—with some restrictions in news and current affairs. I had two years to do the fieldwork, because it's an organization of 25,000 people—impossible! So you have to take decisions: I researched mainly television, because it's the most costly and difficult and the most popular medium, and within that drama, because it was where all the problems were converging, and because I wanted my study to span the most popular to the most high-cultural programming. I wanted news and current affairs because of the long tradition of political critique of BBC news and current affairs output. After a year, I had been working my way around, and in fact I'd got quite close to the top, to the television controllers who run the TV channels. This was fascinating, because nobody had previously done research on the design of channels—even though this is a core creative practice in both television and radio. I was sitting in controllers' meetings with the two top guys. Suddenly, I got this letter, out of the blue, signed by four top BBC officials—among them the two TV channel controllers—saying that they demanded closer control over what I was doing. Legal language—and this is when I had the dream, actually a nightmare, which I describe in the book. I went to a barrister, I took free legal advice, and I began to fear that if they didn't like what I might write, I could be sued. It was very frightening.

So, to come back to cultural institutions: this kind of research can be risky and scary. In the middle of my BBC research I came across a story of a woman who had made a study of a major theatre in London, I believe the Royal Court—one of our foremost new writers' theatres. This woman had made an inside study, had written it up, and the theatre slapped a legal injunction on her preventing her from publishing it. This haunted me, and this went on until my study was published seven or eight years later—

anxiety the whole time. So I took legal advice, and I learned that, under British law at the time, when you do studies of any organization, public or private, you're there on their sufferance: if they want to end your access, they can. That's how it was, and within those conditions I did my best. It was full of extraordinary episodes; for example, I'd been given an office to use by the head of drama, but when he left, I turned up and found that my office was empty—all my books, interviews, tapes had gone! I went to the head of personnel, and she said: "Oh, we had to move you. We put you over in this block, you know, two miles away." So I began to encounter more hostility, but I got around, I got some wonderful responses, and ultimately it was the best research experience I've ever had, very deep fieldwork—I have about 1500 pages of field notes. The book is just the surface, as so often with ethnography.

Having finished the fieldwork, as a courtesy and to get feedback, I sent the BBC manuscript—as I also did with my IRCAM study—to ten of my top informants. What usually happens is that almost nobody replies. From Ircam, George Lewis and Steve MacAdams said a couple of things; only one person wrote a lengthy reply. In fact, the reception was very positive from some informants: Alejandro Viñao loved the book, as did several key others. George Lewis, Steve MacAdams and I have remained in touch, and the same is true in recent years for Jean-Baptiste Barrière and David Wessel—who was partly responsible for inviting me to Berkeley to give the Bloch lectures in 2014. George Lewis and I became good friends and colleagues. So a number of key voices in the study have always said the book was insightful and important. Lewis took a great deal from the book; for example, my argument that computer music software is itself immanently encultured and is itself the bearer of aesthetic tendencies informed his evolving attitude towards his own software writing, including his well-known "Voyager" system.[11] So the Ircam study had a number of productive effects for some of those in the book. Adrian Freed remains a friend; he set up the Center for New Music and Audio Technologies (CNMAT) with David Wessel at Berkeley, and when I was at Berkeley in 2014, Adrian told me that the book, and its analysis of Ircam, fed into their thinking about what to do and what *not* to do with CNMAT.

I mentioned earlier my feeling of vulnerability regarding both my studies of major institutions. This was well founded. When looking for a publisher for *Rationalizing Culture*, I was asked by a leading British-based international academic publisher to obtain an official letter of permission from Ircam before they would agree to publish my study, to be added as a preface to my book. I was surprised and asked senior academic colleagues for their opinions about this: I had never heard of someone asking for permission to publish an independent academic study, and having this permission emblazoned as an "official" preface to a book. The senior colleagues told me this was unheard of, and advised me to refuse; and so I sought a different publisher who would not set this condition, eventually alighting on an American press—the University of California Press, who were very supportive. Nonetheless, during the publication process, I had serious anxieties that something might go wrong—I might be sued, I might have to find high legal fees, and so on. At the time it was genuinely a very difficult thing to do: to publish a critical independent study of a major institution. I had similar anxieties about publishing my BBC research.

So, why are even these *public* cultural institutions reluctant to allow such independent studies to occur and to be published? Where was their commitment to public scrutiny, and to what we now call transparency and accountability? These terms barely existed

in the political lexicon of the 1980s, and came in during the 1990s (in fact, in my BBC study I chart the entry of exactly this discourse into the BBC during the late 90s). I guess it's because PR, reputation and profile—which contribute to legitimation—are so politically and economically valuable and important to them. But I think there's also a certain arrogance and *hauteur* among cultural czars, whether of Ircam or the BBC—a view that an individual study by an unknown academic could not possibly grasp the total significance of what they are doing and on no account can be allowed to put that valuable work at risk. Self-preservation is perhaps a standard prerequisite for cultural bureaucrats. Unknown researchers are risky; and this throws light back on the cosy circuits of mutually reinforcing reputation management that otherwise go on between the major cultural institutions and their czars, and the critics and journalists who generally write about them.[12]

Theoretical and methodological stance

I. C. AND A. F. — In your article "The Social and the Aesthetic: For a Post-Bourdieuian Theory of Cultural Production," you return to your research on Ircam and the BBC in order to propose a paradigm shift in the sociology of art. You speak of a new methodology, situated between theoretical models and empirical research, which you call post-positivist empiricism. To support the shift that you envisage, you turn to the work of contemporary anthropologists such as Alfred Gell, Christopher Pinney, and Fred Myers. Do you think this paradigm shift is underway? What research interests you currently in this field?

G. B. — Well, a first question is: what is this "field"? Remember my strange positioning: I am a trained anthropologist who has never held an anthropology job—due to the unorthodox nature of my ethnographic research, which, until recently, was never located outside the West; in my recent five-year research program (outlined below), we have been working in India, Kenya, Argentina, and Cuba—but too late for my anthropology career! And to digress briefly, this speaks to the state of social and cultural anthropology today, which, despite gesturing in the direction of abandoning its 20th century self-definition as the study of exotic "others," has failed seriously to reposition itself as the home of all ethnographic social research, whatever its object. In my view, anthropology today is marked by a certain disciplinary purism and by a lack of dynamic new directions—evident, for instance, in a body of current work focused on the concept of "ethics," extracted and reified as though it was some kind of universal metacategory. So, instead of anthropology, I took jobs in sociology, and in media studies—the jobs I could get—and this speaks to a certain pragmatism. Nonetheless, it's been an interesting career and I'm pleased that as a result I know qualitative sociology, social theory and media studies well; all of them infuse my work in important ways. I was in the Media department for eight years at Goldsmiths College, London, and in the Sociology department for thirteen years at Cambridge University—indeed, I was the main cultural sociologist. And I learned a lot in both places. So my career has been interdisciplinary, my work, too, and that paper reflects this interstitial space. But because of the prevailing disciplinary purism, it's not the kind of paper that anthropologists would read. And if I were to summarize it, it's really an argument for sociology to take lessons from anthropology. Why? Because, as I say in reviewing that body of work, in recent decades anthropology has been taking directions that I argue cultural sociology needs to take and can learn from. I should probably publish a version of the paper also in an anthropology journal, because the anthropology of art itself has

taken slightly strange paths very recently. The turn in the anthropology of art today towards practice-based collaborations with artists, filmmakers and subject communities is productive, but, in my opinion, it's less interesting than the work of Alfred Gell, Chris Pinney, and others. I don't think that collaboration is a substitute for an analytical framework that sets out to understand the place of art in the world. I'm of a sufficiently older generation that I still believe in questions of understanding and explanation—that's my conviction. I believe that in a world like ours today, full of erupting problems, we don't so much need new creative practices—they will occur anyway, they are rampant—but we do still need analysis and explanation, and that's what I seek.

The crucial section in that paper which turns to anthropology is, paradoxically, a kind of attempt *retrospectively* to identify "roots" or, better, fellow travellers among the most interesting anthropologists of art and music, "roots" that relate to what I actually developed for myself in my Ircam and BBC studies. When I did my Ircam or my BBC research, I wasn't reading Gell and Myers—although I was reading Pinney—but when I looked at their work later, I found a number of parallels with my own orientation. Pinney and Gell do work that is tremendously rich and that has been, for me, very important. Recently, for instance, I've been writing a lot about time, from my fieldwork, but also theoretically. We had a conference in 2008 in Cambridge focused on the rediscovery of the sociologist Gabriel Tarde. Bruno Latour was there, among many others, and it was hosted in Social Anthropology. I gave what I feel is one of my best papers: a reading of Tarde that focuses on time.[13] And I've continued that work since then. Pinney also has very interesting work on time—I've learned a great deal from him. I'm writing more and more about the anthropology of time, bringing it into relation with music and art.

My paper "For a Post-Bourdieuian Theory of Cultural Production" comes mainly out of a critique of Bourdieu, and is concerned, first, with the problem of the aesthetic in cultural sociology and the sociology of art, and more broadly with issues of materiality and the cultural object; and secondly, with the need to re-theorize time in relation to cultural production. Both of those issues come very much to the foreground. Another focus of the paper is institutions, which have been a blind spot in the sociology of art, perhaps less so in France, but certainly in the British and American traditions, with the exception of Michèle Lamont and some others. There is a younger generation now doing excellent work on some of these issues, for example Fernando Dominguez Rubio, who did his thesis on the artist Robert Smithson's work *Spiral Jetty*.[14] He makes a fascinating reading, a process-based account of the emergence of this artwork out of a particular material practice. He thus takes a performative *cum* material turn, while still taking an artist and his work as the core framing of the study. It's a wonderful piece, and Rubio is definitely someone whose work I watch. My article elicited an interesting and, in some guises, quite negative set of reactions from some younger sociologists of art, in particular Eduardo de la Fuente and Nick Prior, both of whom wrote response pieces to it,[15] and I don't really know why. I think their fundamental objection is, "Why should sociologists have to have anything to do with anthropology?" But I'm deeply committed to the enormous benefits of reading across these disciplinary boundaries. As I point out, if questions of the aesthetic have largely escaped the sociology of art, the anthropology of art has been focally concerned with them. Why, then, should sociologists not bother to read some anthropology when looking for fruitful models to

develop? You don't have to become deeply immersed in anthropology to read a bit of anthropology of art and learn from it. I think that is where we should be heading. In that sense, the best legacy of Bourdieu would be, for me, a reading that takes both anthropology and sociology into that vision.

I. C. AND A. F. — Judith Butler seems to be a major influence on your theoretical perspective today, especially with the notion of the "constitutive outside." You argue that in a relational musicological approach, one must also look at how boundaries are made and how things may be kept out of the object under study "by forces of 'exclusion, erasure, violent foreclosure, [or] abjection' or, more routinely, by processes of differentiation."[16] Could you discuss Butler's influence on your work in more detail?

G. B. — Actually, I don't take this idea primarily from Butler, nor do I engage deeply with her work—which is not to say that I don't admire it. My use of the "constitutive outside" comes more from Stuart Hall, who I read in the context of my work in media studies. A British scholar, Vikki Bell (Goldsmiths College, London), who is a philosophical and cultural feminist and theorist, has identified the limits in the Butlerian notion of performativity, and I find her stance very compelling. In my Tarde paper, towards the end, I come to a discussion of performativity, and Bell basically takes the view that the notion of performativity itself, even though it's trying to escape the idea of a prior structure which is being performed, nonetheless has to rely on some kind of foreshadow, which the performance itself is, as it were, playing out. She takes this from Deleuze: the contention that what we call performativity should in fact be called "*pre*formativity"—that it depends on some kind of preformed template or entity, which is itself being relayed in performance. She wants to turn instead to a more Deleuzian idea of a process of differentiation that is itself continuously emergent, a more process-based philosophy for which she draws on Bergson, vitalism, and the notion of the creativity of the unfolding of the event.[17] I find this compelling. It's very much a problem that I want to pose for myself: the challenge of thinking beyond structure—and of course, this takes us far beyond Bourdieu.

When thinking about time, however—and this is tremendously informed by working on music and art—it becomes clear that these philosophically-posed, theoretical stances on process and emergence do not manage to surpass structure in the ways that we need. In a post-positivist empiricist sense, when we're working on problems from music history, or contemporary music or art, we encounter multiple kinds of time. In some respects, this goes back to Gell, Pinney, and other writers in the anthropology of time. But the same question pervades art history as well, this question that time is not singular but multiple. So, how do we think about time's multiplicity? There's an early glimpse of this thinking in papers like the "The Social and the Aesthetic,"[18] when I elaborate on four "orders" of time; but I've now expanded considerably on those ideas and I've been giving a number of papers on time at Harvard, Stanford, Oxford—at a conference on "Making Time in Music" in September this year—and other places. We can address this issue in a number of ways: we can think about it as time produced by the art or musical object itself, which I take from my reading of both Gell and Pinney. In fact, I've recently finished what I hope is a major statement on these matters commissioned by Rita Felski, a literary studies scholar and editor of the journal *New Literary History*, for a special section on "Beyond Bourdieu." In literary theory, they have the same idea about the cultural object itself producing time through its afterlives (in the ways, as we discussed earlier, that my Ircam book has done!) and how the cultural object—whether a book or an artwork—moves through the world and

engenders responses and events. In these ways, the object itself creates time in a number of ways. Of course, music has its own internal temporalities, the focus of decades of research in music analysis, music theory, and music perception—music's "inner time." However, I want to argue that no musical or artistic work or event comes to us outside of its embeddedness in historical processes of the formation of genres, and of the ongoing lineages that it draws on and mutates, so we must also think of those lineages and genres as both producing and produced in time. We need a way to conceptualize these different yet simultaneous orders of time. And my suggestion is that we can't possibly conceptualize historical time, or time in relation to any contemporary event, without thinking of these multiple orders of time and their complex and contingent conjunctions. That's where I've reached at this point, and all of this is set out in my article "Making Time: Temporality, History, and the Cultural Object," which ends, incidentally, by briefly referencing Bernard Stiegler on "technics and time" and his debt to Gilbert Simondon.[19]

I. C. AND A. F. — In the articles "The Social and the Aesthetic: For a Post-Bourdieuian Theory of Cultural Production" and "For a Relational Musicology: Music and Interdisciplinarity, Beyond the Practice Turn," you use the term "value communities." This is a powerful analytical concept, and we would ask you to elaborate on how you use this term, from where you derived it, and how to distinguish it from the Bourdieuian notion of a "field."

G. B. — This idea is of course a variant of the concept of an "interpretive community." It seemed to me that an interpretive community has the effect of bringing a little bit of sociology, particularly the sociological analysis of reception, into literary studies. I mentioned earlier the afterlife of texts, and what the idea of interpretive community was able to do was to open up an oft-neglected question in traditional literary studies: that is, what happens in reception, how a text is diffused around an interpretive community, and how it will generate different interpretive experiences as it travels and is diffused, encountering distinctive groups and cultural locations. All of these crucial questions regarding reception are posed productively by that term. But in the two articles you mention I am talking mainly about cultural production—the first link in the "production-text-research" chain. This makes me want to bring up the work of Jean-Jacques Nattiez and his tripartite semiological terms—poiesis, trace, esthesis[20]—which indicate the creation process, the musical object itself, and its reception. It was necessary and, in a sense, long overdue to introduce this conception to music studies, and nobody seems to have noticed since that a similar tripartite distinction —"production-text-reception"—is decades old in communication theory, media studies, and even literary theory. Yet the message of needing to think this way still hasn't really taken hold in musicology. One still hears papers given by eminent and very contemporary musicologists where the lesson has not yet been absorbed that it's necessary to distinguish between what is inscribed in the text by an author, which may itself not be transparent or self-consistent, the text itself as a polysemic trace of this process, and what the text makes possible in terms of reception—the modes of listening and musical experience that it affords or invites. The idea brought by Nattiez to musicology that there is no symmetry, that we cannot conflate these three "moments," is a message that's decades old in communication and cultural theory but new to musicology. That we have to concern ourselves, in research terms, with the production process, with the text, and with interpretation and reception, and they can't be collapsed: this is a foundational insight, but it hasn't yet taken hold. This is another

example of musicology being out of step with broader cultural theory, and of the benefits of interdisciplinarity.

To come back to value communities, then: if interpretive community alerts us to the social life of any text in reception, then value community brings this in at the production end. In all of my work, what I have become aware of is how profoundly embedded all creative practices are in a value community or a genre community—I'll return to the distinction in a moment. This is an important message for musicology. Of course, a genre may be radically transformed by the work of any particular individual or group; the genre is also relayed and evolves through their contributions. There is both an aesthetic constellation and the performative acts that prolong, relay, and transform it. I became particularly aware of this when working on forms of cultural production that are not purely artistic: in mass media production, in television, or radio. In these fields there are practitioners who are intensely aware of the field, or the community of practice, within which they are working, and in relation to which they conceive of their own work. At the BBC, when I looked at the creative work of documentary television producers, popular drama series producers, and current affairs producers, it became obvious that these producers not only work in relation to the BBC or their home departments, but that they are also engaged with wider national and international fields of television or film production specific to the genre—documentary, say—in which they work, responding to dominant currents, following and emulating emerging trends. As a consequence, I charted the existence of genre-specific aesthetic and ethical reflexivities in relation to particular television genres.[21] My intention was to reveal how reflexive these subjectivities among producers are, and to stress that they are both aesthetically and ethically inflected. In other words, the ethics of documentary, for example, evolve in tandem with documentary aesthetics, and sometimes (as I show) in incredibly interesting ways—but, blindingly, these developments are always specific to particular genres. To pursue this example, the documentary sensibility during my fieldwork in 1996-98 was very distinctive, and entirely about wider aesthetic and ethico-political currents in documentary at the time. [22] That said, of course we should not reify genres too much. The crucial point about all of this creative practice, imbued with this reflexivity that is both aesthetic and ethical, is that it's constantly driven by *value*: by judgements and comparison with reference to other contemporaneous practices, judgements about what is valuable, what is less so, what is emerging, cutting-edge, on the way out, or passé in a particular generic space. It is this reality that made me foreground value, because the bread and butter of all creative practitioners and all cultural producers is the making of such value judgements in relation to a community of other practitioners, other movements—indeed, that's what artists and composers are doing all the time! And yet an awareness of the value-imbued nature of such fields of creative practice, to return to Bourdieu, doesn't seem to be well developed. My contribution, then, is to propose that position-taking, in the Bourdieuian sense, is always also imbued with value—an aesthetic and an ethical position-taking, with no simple relationship between the two; hence the significance of the concept of value communities.

Regarding genre, I take my reading of genre theory in large part from film theory, because it is there in the work of people like Steve Neale, Rick Altman, and others that a powerful *sociological* conception of genre has emerged, one that takes into account the triangle of production, text, and audience, and where production is understood also in

terms of the institutions and the political economy that enables a certain text to emerge. I'm about to edit a collection on music and genre with the popular music scholar David Brackett (from McGill),[23] and we want to revivify the discussion of genre in music, since the way genre theory has developed till now in popular music studies is less effective conceptually than the way it has developed in film theory. We want to bring this more sociological reading of genre into music studies. Genre *could* also be compatible with the approach that I've chosen to call value communities—but of course genre theory isn't just about the creative, production end. So, I think "value communities" works well to designate this constellation within which discourses on value are to the forefront and constantly in debate; to use one of my favourite formulations from Bourdieu, discourses of value become the basis for the dissensus within the consensus. These are fertile, febrile, never-resolved spaces of debate over the value of both contemporaneous and past practices. That, to me, is probably the most important characterization of what a value community is. Then, in addition, in analysing cultural production, we have to reintroduce all the conditions—the institutional and funding conditions, the audiences that have to be sought, everything else that we would want to enrich the account. The project I envision therefore bridges the sociological or anthropological and the arts and humanities, highlighting the focal importance of discourses and judgements of aesthetic value.

What I take from Bourdieu in this respect is extremely powerful. I think that Bourdieu is absolutely right: there is a field of internal, subtle position-takings that are competitive and complementary—individuals occupying spaces that others are not. And in my ethnography of art-science interdisciplinarity in the mid-2000s, for which I did fieldwork in the UK and California, it was clear that in a very new field like art-science, artists carefully occupy different spaces because it gives their work individuality. The field itself was emerging; we could see that people were *creating* a field by staking out their territories, occupying spaces at the edges. And the most startling thing of all was how *minute* the differences could be in these position-takings. [24] We found the same in our recent ethnographies of the successors to electronic, electroacoustic, and computer music today, in the MusDig research program: a vast, swelling sea of creative practices, forging new aesthetic, ideological, and material constellations, but often by making only tiny differentiations between the previous and the next musical object or event, or between one composer or musician or genre and the next. The effect is the emergence of a huge field or fields of thousands of practitioners, better captured perhaps by the metaphor of a cloud, a congeries, or a population, all of them introducing minute differences from their *confrères*, or re-mixing given elements in some way. This image of a kind of cloud formation that's billowing along is, of course, in marked contrast to the heroic idea that we have from art history or historical musicology of giant individual creators on a landscape, artists and composers whose singularity is gauged by the very large spaces around them, which attest to their individuality. And in diagnosing the state of post-electronic music today, I've found myself reaching for the idea of the "massification" of the avant-garde, because I can't think of anything more apt to describe it. I don't particularly like this term, but I can't find another way to convey the sheer huge, transnational scale of what we've been researching. This suggests, by the way, that we need to retheorize the avant-garde—given this massification, this minute production of difference, this obsessive internality in the form, as Bourdieu puts it, of "production for one's peers."

I. C. AND A. F. — "Relational:" could you elaborate on why this is the term you chose to describe your research methodology? It could be read almost as the creation of a new research program, even a new discipline: Relational Musicology.

G. B. — The first thing to say is that while the term "relational" is in the air, it's being used in quite different ways. We can try to pin this down, and I myself am using it in a particular way. Most obviously, Nicholas Cook's idea of a relational musicology[25] is radically different to mine. Fundamentally, Cook is turning to ethnomusicology and registering with this concept that there are other communities of musicians and musical thought around the world, arguing that we have to stand in a position of respect and obeisance to these other traditions. He's struggling with this as a kind of ethical problem, and the way he takes it is really in the direction of intercultural studies. That's fine; I'm perfectly happy to think about interculturalism and the ethics of encounters between distinctive traditions or theories of music. But I'm doing something quite different, not primarily ethical at all. I'm developing an intellectual stance for musicology going forward, proposing paths toward a new methodological future. It may sound appallingly self-satisfied but, you know, I'm lucky to be late in my career! The main part of my career has been in the social sciences, and I don't need musicology's approval. I have a certain status now, and that gives me some freedom, which brings both license and responsibilities. I think my responsibility is to be bold. It is my responsibility to try ideas that nobody else might dare to try out, because they're worried about jobs or tenure. I can say things that sometimes jump over disciplinary fences.

So, on one level, the notion of "relational musicology" is a kind of provocation. I was able to point to scholars who are doing incredibly important work which is broadly assimilable to my concept, which I did rather cheekily, since I didn't check with them first! I found, for example, three examples of work on the historical construction of dominant categories and their subsequent institutionalization and legitimation—we might say, classic Bourdieuian research out of a Weberian problem. Alex Rehding, at Harvard, is doing that kind of research for the 19th century German roots of American musicology,[26] with a wonderful story he tells about Chinese music as this kind of anomaly which can't be dealt with in that work. Ana María Ochoa Gautier, from Columbia, is working on similar issues in the Latin American context, on the mutual constitution of nationalisms and "folk" musics, mediated by the rise of folklorists, the institutions of national broadcasting, and so on.[27] Katherine Butler Schofield's contribution is on the 16th-century Mughal empire, when suddenly notions of "classical" music emerge and are differentiated from mere "folk" musics.[28] At base these are very similar kinds of research, and one of my points is that they are not yet recognized as such methodologically: all of them are looking at the relationship between distinctive lineages of music as these lineages are being produced, reified, usually discursively, and then institutionalized, and the wider historical and cultural-political consequences of these processes.

What I'm asking to be addressed in a relational musicology, then, are the *relations between coeval and contiguous musics*, and how the differences between them are produced, reified, and experienced historically in any particular era. This, to me, is precisely a relational type of method, and I add two further kinds of relational analysis in the article. It may be completely ad hoc, it may be purely contingent, but often in the history of music we find that things that are claimed to be contingent and completely

unrelated actually are not—often, rather, deep ideological work is going on in order to produce what appear to be radically "separate" developments or "autonomies." Often, the production of aesthetic differences is just as much the production of social, cultural, and ideological difference. The creation of both difference and identity, or similarity, is at once a social and an aesthetic process, and it is invariably relational—grounded in the relations being produced between different musics. Of course, the basic principle of this method, which is just an application of the tenets of post-structuralism, is to take it as read that identities are not just identities. Identities are always produced through the production of boundaries and differences, or, on the other hand, through the erasure of identities and the creation of sameness within an enlarged identity. And that's the basis of my proposal for a relational musicology, a musicology that focuses not on ready-made categories of music, categories that are assumed and not interrogated—"popular" music, "art" music, "folk" music—but a musicology that probes how these categories have arisen, how they are reproduced and change over time, and the aesthetic, social and cultural work to which they are put. This was actually one of the core themes of my co-edited book *Western Music and Its Others* (2000),[29] but it is methodologically and conceptually foregrounded in the 2010 article. I would be disappointed if the term "relational" detracted from what is more important, which is to become aware of these processes. Can you see now how very different this is from Cook's ethical concept?

I. C. AND A. F. — In the same article, "For a Relational Musicology," you refer to a "new, integrated music studies."[30] Despite the disciplinary opening you propose in this paper, you continue to use the label "music" instead of less hierarchical and constrained categories, such as, for example, "sound" as used in "sound studies"—although your interest in this field is evident in the collective volume *Music, Sound and Space* under your editorship.[31] How do you currently understand the distinction between "music" and "sound" in your work?

G. B. — We are currently writing up a number of books and journal collections coming out of my ERC funded research program, "Music, Digitisation, Mediation: Towards Interdisciplinary Music Studies" or MusDig.[32] There are several such volumes, including one recently published that addresses the unequal state of gender relations in electronic and computer music.[33] The most important book will have chapters on each of the eight ethnographies in the MusDig research program.[34] The program itself was designed as a relational one, inasmuch as we had studies based both in the developing and in the developed world, studies of music's creation, circulation and consumption, and studies of popular, folk, and art musics. Two projects looked comparatively at the influence of digitization and digital media in popular musics in Argentina and Kenya; two other projects looked broadly, again comparatively, at electronic and computer art musics and sound art in Britain and the city of Montreal as they are evolving with digital technologies; and these projects on art music were complemented by an ethnographic study of the most globally dominant music software package, the programme Max, which originated in Ircam. A further study focused on the digital recording, curation, and archiving of folk musics in North India. And then three studies focused broadly on consumption: one took Cuba and Montreal as sites, respectively, of digital scarcity and digital plenty; another study examined the illegal or "grey" economies that have sprung up around the sale of music for consumption on mobile phones in India; and a third ethnography involved a comparative study of internet-based music consumption in the guise of Spotify and an illegal peer-to-peer platform.

So you see there is plenty to analyse here! I am currently working on the last bits of two books and another double journal issue.

Clearly, there is a relational aspect to all of this: art and popular, developing and developed world, online and offline, production and consumption. The MusDig program was designed that way purposefully, with a number of vectors of comparison. Then we did the ethnographies, and you simply have no idea in advance what will come out of it. Some completely unforeseen research findings became very powerful comparatively across all of the studies. One such connection is, very broadly, in the area of intellectual property: in all of the studies, stemming from the effects of music's digitization, there were radical transformations in musical authorship, or in the nature of music as property, or in the forms taken by music as an object, a commodity, or a good. One edited collection, to be published by Duke, focuses on just these questions, with additional chapters by ethnomusicological colleagues (Veit Erlmann, Alex Perullo, Henry Stobart, and Michelle Bigheno) whose work is cutting edge on these matters and complements our own. But we did not know, before doing the ethnographies, that this would become a core comparative theme of our research. Other completely unforeseen links came out as well: the two studies on popular music production, in Argentina and Kenya, are fantastically interesting in a relational or comparative sense, because they exemplify completely different fortunes. In Kenya, the digital popular music scene is tremendously lively, and we witnessed the growth of an economically viable "born digital" music industry; while in Argentina, in comparison, the local music economy is seriously declining, musicians and entrepreneurs are very pessimistic, and there is a poor outlook for the local music industry. I give these examples to illustrate the point that, at least with ethnographic work, we set up a broad, rich, comparative empirical canvas in order to discover major developments that we cannot know in advance! That is precisely the importance of good and sustained empirical research. Yet, in fact, all kinds of very important findings emerge. This allows us to do the first of the three things I discuss in the "relational musicology" article: that is, to take contiguous situations and see how they fare in terms of their similarities and differences, and their interrelations; the comparison itself generates many insights. And this can be true even within a single study. For example, in my study of digital art musics in Britain and Montreal, I did fieldwork in five or six university centres, and I was tremendously interested in their local ecologies. They have many striking similarities; but there are also a number of networks, including prominent transnational ones, developing between them. This leads me to articulate what is probably the closest to a methodological injunction in my work, taken from both Foucault and Bourdieu, which is already there in my Ircam study and has continued all along: the idea of not beginning from a problem of identity, but rather from a question of difference. My concern is not with reducing complexity, but the contrary: with opening out complexity. When I'm confronted with an additional aspect of a problem in fieldwork, I ask myself: "does this confirm what I already know, or does it open up another dimension of enquiry and analysis?" That is really the ethnographic, and pragmatic, principle that I've taken to all of my work.

To return to the question of "sound" that you raised: one way that sound enters into the recent MusDig research, as I mentioned, is through the need ethnographically to account for the rapid escalation and growing visibility of sound art practices in the studies we did of contemporary digital art musics. This and our work on acousmatic

and electroacoustic music took us to questions of sound and space—since space is a key parameter in these kinds of creative musical and sonic practices. I ran a conference in Cambridge in 2008 in which these issues were to the fore, and that's where my edited book *Music, Sound and Space* (2013) was incubated as I became increasingly attuned to the need to bring space, spatial relations, and spatial mediations into my analytical vocabulary. At the same time, these orientations do not preclude key sociological issues: the boundary between electronic music and sound art was a loaded one in our fieldwork, and one that we discovered marked highly gendered distinctions. In Montreal and the UK, we found that while women were very much less audible and visible in most electronic music scenes and in the university trainings we studied closely, women were very active in diverse sound art practices, often inhabiting not the contemporary music world but that of the visual arts. There are reasons for this gendering of contemporary music that I won't elaborate on here. But suffice it to say that it is on the basis of this and similar findings that gender arose as one very significant line of analysis of our research on digital art musics today. But of course, this problem is not limited to digital art musics. I've just returned from the Darmstadt International Summer School for New Music, which had its 70th anniversary this year, and the existence of historical gender inequalities became a major theme of political discussion there both among the visiting composers and students and with the Director, Thomas Schafer. This, by the way, is a highly interesting, symbolically important development, and it may lead to new research in partnership with Darmstadt, a kind of "action research" on the transformation of the festival as an institution along the lines of increasing gender equity.

Through the MusDig studies I also got interested in how one might need to conceptualise sound in relation to music and sound art, and that is the core question addressed by the "Introduction" to the book *Music, Sound and Space*. But the question also folds back reflexively on the very boundaries of the disciplines of musicology and sound studies. In short, my argument here has been that sound studies—which seems to declare a kind of disciplinary "year zero," a kind of autarchy, as though it has no relation nor responsibility to the prior music disciplines—arises, in part, in reaction to the vacuum left by historical musicology with respect to studying the last fifty or sixty years of creative musical practice. Since there is effectively no musicology of the period in which sound art emerged and has flourished, one dimension of sound studies has been to capitalize on these developments. In this way, sound studies also takes advantage of the new paradigm of "practice-based research" to develop hand in hand with sound art practice—with the emergence and rapid diffusion of sound maps, sound walks, sound installation work, fieldwork recording-based works, and so on. In this sense, we might conceive of sound studies almost—although this is implicit and not articulated—as a kind of reproach to musicology for abandoning the challenges posed by the last half century. I am quite sympathetic to this charge—of musicology's excessive historicism as, at the same time, an abnegation of responsibility to be in dialogue with music (and sound art) in the present. Of course, sound studies has also emerged much more routinely as an addition, a supplement and a correction, to what are now seen as the visual-centric biases of the standard disciplines—history, sociology, anthropology. This aspect of its emergence partakes in the so-called "sensory turn," adding dimensions of sound and hearing that have previously been missing from research in these fields. I am also sympathetic to this development. But it seems to me

to be, again, less aware than is desirable of how sound studies comes in to counterbalance the ways in which the category of "music" has previously hoovered up the historians', anthropologists', and sociologists' interests in researching aural and auditory aspects of human cultures and lives.

I. C. AND A. F. — And what do you see as the future of your work following the MusDig research program?

G. B. — Well, I have returned since January 2016 to teaching full-time, now in the Music Faculty at Oxford, which allows for less interdisciplinary connections to be made than I would like. In this regard, Oxford is less productive for me than Cambridge, where the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities was a marvellous generator of interdisciplinary collaborations. I miss this kind of machinery devoted to interdisciplinarity in Oxford! In terms of writing, the final challenge, perhaps of my career, is to bring together in one integrated statement my various accounts—now scattered through my various articles and books—of music's social, material, temporal, and spatial mediation, along with my work on musical affect and on retheorizing the aesthetic.[35] The aim will be to show not only the enormous gains that anthropology, sociology, and cultural theory bring to the study of music, but how tremendously powerful music is as a means of engineering the progress of thought in social and cultural theory. I hope I'll be able to achieve this! Can I end by thanking you both very much for inviting me to be interviewed, and for your patience in finalising the text?

NOTES

1. BARRY, Andrew and BORN, Georgina (eds.), *Interdisciplinarity: Reconfigurations of the Social and Natural Sciences*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2013.

2. BORN, Georgina, *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Musical Avant-Garde*, Berkeley-London, University of California Press, 1995.

3. BORN, Georgina, "Anthropology, Kleinian Psychoanalysis, and the Subject in Culture," *American Anthropologist, New Series* 100, no. 2, June 1998, p. 373-386.

4. BORN, Georgina, "The Social and the Aesthetic: For a Post-Bourdieuian Theory of Cultural Production," *Cultural Sociology* 4, no. 2, 2010, p. 171-208.

5. Andrew Barry is Chair in Human Geography and Professor of Political Geography at UCL in the UK.

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8. BORN, Georgina, "On Music and Politics: Henry Cow, Avant-Gardism and its Discontents," in ADLINGTON, Robert (ed.), *Red Strains. Music and Communism Outside the Communist Bloc*, Oxford, Oxford University Press/British Academy, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 185, 2013, p. 55-64.

9. ANDERSON, Julian, "Down with them. Value for money or a monstrous white elephant? Julian Anderson guardedly welcomes an anthropological study of IRCAM," *The Musical Times* 138, no. 1848, February 1997, p. 25-29.

10. The Institute for Public Policy Research, a center-left think tank influential with the UK's Labour Party.

11. See LEWIS, George E. "Too many notes: Computers, complexity and culture in voyager," *Leonardo Music Journal* 10, 2000, p. 33-39. In addition to *Rationalizing Culture*, the papers that develop this argument are: BORN, Georgina, "(Im)materiality and sociality: The dynamics of intellectual property in a computer software research culture," *Social Anthropology* 4, no. 2, 1996, p. 101-116; and BORN, Georgina, "Computer software as a medium: Textuality, orality and sociality in an Artificial Intelligence research culture," in BANKS, Marcus and MORPHY, Howard (eds.), *Rethinking Visual Anthropology*, New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 1997, p. 139-169.

12. For an analysis of just such an "inflationary cycle" of charisma, prestige, and legitimation, one that is characteristic of musical and artistic fields, in which musicians and artists, intermediaries (critics, managers, agents, etc.), and institutions (labels, galleries, concert organisations, publishers and so on) engage in a spiral of mutual endorsement and valorisation, see BORN, *Rationalizing Culture...*, *op. cit.*, p. 91-94.

13. BORN, Georgina, "On Tardean Relations: Temporality and Ethnography," in CANDEA, Matei (ed.), *The Social After Gabriel Tarde: Debates and Assessments*, London, Routledge, 2012, p. 230-247.

14. See FERNANDO DOMÍNGUEZ, Rubio, "The Material Production of the Spiral Jetty: A Study of Culture in the Making," *Cultural Sociology* 6, no. 2, 2012, p. 143-61.

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16. BORN, Georgina, "For a Relational Musicology: Music and Interdisciplinarity, Beyond the Practice Turn," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 135, no. 2, 2010, p. 230.

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18. BORN, "The Social and the Aesthetic..."

19. BORN, Georgina, "Making time: Temporality, history, and the cultural object," *New Literary History* 46, no. 3, Summer 2015, p. 361-386.

20. See NATTIEZ, Jean-Jacques, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990.

21. BORN, Georgina, "Reflexivity and Ambivalence: Culture, Creativity and Government in the BBC," *Cultural Values: Journal of Cultural Research* 6, no. 1-2, 2002, p. 65-90; and BORN, *Uncertain Vision...*

22. This analysis of documentary is provided in the second half of Chapter 9, in BORN, *Uncertain Vision...* For a similar analysis of television drama, see Chapter 8 of the same book.

23. BORN, Georgina and BRACKETT, David (eds.), *Music and Genre: New Directions* (forthcoming from Duke University Press).

24. For an account of this art-science ethnography, see BORN, Georgina and BARRY, Andrew, "Art-Science: From Public Understanding to Public Experiment," in BORN and BARRY (eds.), *Interdisciplinarity...*, p. 247-272.

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26. REHDING, Alexander, "Wax Cylinder Revolutions," *Musical Quarterly* 88, no. 1, Spring 2005, p. 123-160.

27. OCHOA GAUTIER, Ana Maria, "Sonic Transculturation, Epistemologies of Purification and the Aural Public Sphere in Latin America," *Social Identities* 12, no. 6, 2006, p. 803-825.

28. BUTLER SCHOFIELD, Katherine, "Reviving the Golden Age again: 'Classicization', Hindustani music, and the Mughals," *Ethnomusicology* 54, 2010, p. 484-517.

29. BORN, Georgina and HESMONDHALGH, David (eds.), *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, Berkeley and London, University of California Press, 2000.
30. BORN, "For a Relational Musicology…," p. 206.
31. BORN, Georgina (ed.), *Music, Sound and Space: Transformations of Public and Private Experience*, Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2013.
32. For more information, see http://musdig.music.ox.ac.uk/ (ERC is the European Research Council—editor's note.)
33. See the special issue of the *Contemporary Music Review* 35, no. 1 (2016) edited by Georgina BORN and Kyle DEVINE and titled *Gender, Creativity and Education in Digital Musics and Sound Art*.
34. To be published as BORN, Georgina (ed.), *Digital Musics: A Global Anthropology*.
35. One manifestation of this re-theorisation of the aesthetic is the book *Improvisation and Social Aesthetics*, edited by Georgina BORN, Eric LEWIS, and Will STRAW, to be published by Duke University Press in March 2017.

ABSTRACTS

In this interview, Georgina Born retraces the origins of two of her major ethnographic studies, at Ircam and the BBC, and delves into how she developed her specific, interdisciplinary methodology. She makes a convincing case for reading outside disciplinary borders, and discusses how her research has changed as she has become more established. Her critics are addressed, and the interview ends with a glance to future projects which aim to bring together the various threads her research has explored over the years.

Dans cet entretien, Georgina Born revient sur les origines de deux de ses grandes études ethnographiques, à l'Ircam et à la BBC. Elle retrace la manière dont elle a développé sa méthodologie originale et interdisciplinaire. Elle défend avec conviction la nécessité des lectures qui débordent les frontières disciplinaires et réfléchit sur les inflexions de sa recherche depuis qu'elle est mieux reconnue. Elle répond à ses critiques et clôt l'entretien en évoquant les projets à venir, qui tenteront de rassembler les fils conducteurs de son travail.

INDEX

Mots-clés: musique de la fin du XXe et du XXIe siècles, musique et médiations, théorie sociale et culturelle, ethnographie, interdisciplinarité, institutions culturelles
Keywords: music in the late 20th and 21st centuries, music and mediation, cultural production, ethnography, interdisciplinarity, cultural institutions

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